AN 3.63 — At Venāgapura

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Text

Numbered Discourses 3.63

7. The Great Chapter

At Venāgapura

At one time the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of mendicants when he arrived at a village of the Kosalan brahmins named Venāgapura. The brahmins and householders of Venāgapura heard:

“It seems the ascetic Gotama—a Sakyan, gone forth from a Sakyan family—has arrived at Venāgapura. He has this good reputation: ‘That Blessed One is perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those fit for training, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’ He has realized with his own insight this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, gods and humans—and he makes it known to others. He teaches Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And he reveals a spiritual practice that’s entirely full and pure. It’s good to see such perfected ones.”

Then the brahmins and householders of Venāgapura went up to the Buddha. Before sitting down to one side, some bowed, some exchanged greetings and polite conversation, some held up their cupped palms toward the Buddha, some announced their name and clan, while some kept silent. Then the brahmin Vacchagotta of Venāgapura said to the Buddha:

“It’s incredible, worthy Gotama, it’s amazing, how your faculties are so very clear, and the complexion of your skin is pure and bright. It’s like a golden brown jujube in the autumn, or a ripe palmyra fruit freshly plucked from the stalk, or a pendant of Black Plum River gold, fashioned by a deft smith, well-wrought in the forge, and placed on a cream rug where it shines and glows and dazzles. In the same way, your faculties are so very clear, and the complexion of your skin is pure and bright.

Surely the worthy Gotama gets when he wants, without trouble or difficulty, various kinds of high and luxurious bedding, such as: sofas, couches, woolen covers—shag-piled, colorful, white, embroidered with flowers, quilted, embroidered with animals, double or single fringed—and silk covers studded with gems, as well as silken sheets, wollen carpets, rugs for elephants, horses, or chariots, black antelope hides and woven rugs, and spreads of fine deer hide, with a canopy above and red cushions at both ends.”

“Brahmin, these various kinds of high and luxurious bedding are hard for renunciates to find. And even if they do get them, they’re not allowed.

There are, brahmin, these three high and luxurious beds that I get these days when I want, without trouble or difficulty. What three? The heavenly high and luxurious bed, the divine high and luxurious bed, and the noble high and luxurious bed. These are the three high and luxurious beds that I get these days when I want, without trouble or difficulty.”

“But what, worthy Gotama, is the heavenly high and luxurious bed?”

“Brahmin, when I am living supported by a village or town, I robe up in the morning and, taking my bowl and robe, enter the town or village for alms. After the meal, on my return from almsround, I enter within a forest. I gather up some grass or leaves into a pile and sit down cross-legged, setting my body straight, and bringing mindfulness to the present. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, I enter and remain in the first absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of seclusion, while placing the mind and keeping it connected. As the placing of the mind and keeping it connected are stilled, I enter and remain in the second absorption, which has the rapture and bliss born of immersion, with internal clarity and mind at one, without placing the mind and keeping it connected. And with the fading away of rapture, I enter and remain in the third absorption, where I meditate with equanimity, mindful and aware, experiencing for themselves the bliss of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous and mindful, one meditates in bliss.’ With the giving up of pleasure and pain, and the disappearance of former happiness and sadness, I enter and remain in the fourth absorption, without pleasure or pain, with pure equanimity and mindfulness. When I’m practicing like this, if I walk, at that time my walking is heavenly. When I’m practicing like this, if I stand, at that time my standing is heavenly. When I’m practicing like this, if I sit, at that time my sitting is heavenly. When I’m practicing like this, if I lie down, at that time my lying is heavenly. This is the heavenly high and luxurious bed that I get these days when I want, without trouble or difficulty.”

“It’s incredible, worthy Gotama, it’s amazing! Who but the worthy Gotama could get such a heavenly high and luxurious bed when he wants, without trouble or difficulty?

But what, worthy Gotama, is the divine high and luxurious bed?”

“Brahmin, when I am living supported by a village or town, I robe up in the morning and, taking my bowl and robe, enter the town or village for alms. After the meal, on my return from almsround, I enter within a forest. I gather up some grass or leaves into a pile and sit down cross-legged, setting my body straight, and bringing mindfulness to the present. I meditate spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, I spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will. I meditate spreading a heart full of compassion to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, I spread a heart full of compassion to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will. I meditate spreading a heart full of rejoicing to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above,

below, across, everywhere, all around, I spread a heart full of rejoicing to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will. I meditate spreading a heart full of equanimity to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, I spread a heart full of equanimity to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will. When I'm practicing like this, if I walk, at that time my walking is divine. … my standing is divine. … my sitting is divine. When I'm practicing like this, if I lie down, at that time my lying is divine. This is the divine high and luxurious bed that I get these days when I want, without trouble or difficulty."

"It's incredible, worthy Gotama, it's amazing! Who but the worthy Gotama could get such a divine high and luxurious bed when he wants, without trouble or difficulty?

But what, worthy Gotama, is the noble high and luxurious bed?"

"Brahmin, when I am living supported by a village or town, I robe up in the morning and, taking my bowl and robe, enter the town or village for alms. After the meal, on my return from almsround, I enter within a forest. I gather up some grass or leaves into a pile and sit down cross-legged, setting my body straight, and bringing mindfulness to the present. I know this: 'I've given up greed, hate, and delusion, cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, obliterated them, so they're unable to arise in the future.' When I'm practicing like this, if I walk, at that time my walking is noble. … my standing is noble. … my sitting is noble. When I'm practicing like this, if I lie down, at that time my lying is noble. This is the noble high and luxurious bed that I get these days when I want, without trouble or difficulty."

"It's incredible, worthy Gotama, it's amazing! Who but the worthy Gotama could get such a noble high and luxurious bed when he wants, without trouble or difficulty?

Excellent, worthy Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what's there, worthy Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways. We go for refuge to the worthy Gotama, to the teaching, and to the mendicant Saṅgha. From this day forth, may the worthy Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge for life."